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ABSTRACT

This report examines efforts on the part of advocates in New York City to draw Hispanic parents into the bilingual education movement. Parent involvement in New York has included a wide variety of educational and political endeavors. Parents have participated in the activities of public educational and political organizations in ever widening arenas, starting in local schools and extending to district, city, state, and national levels. In the process, parents have made cultural adaptations to American society. Rather than fostering cultural or political separatism, these efforts to involve Hispanic parents in the bilingual education movement have contributed to their cultural and social integration. Although opponents fear that bilingual education hinders integration and will foster separatist movements, it is, in fact, the rejection of bilingual education that will result in separatism. (CMG)

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THE ORGANIZING OF PARENTS TO
SUPPORT BILINGUAL EDUCATION

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The Organizing of Parents to Support Bilingual Education

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Summary

Federal support for bilingual education has provoked controversy ever since The Bilingual Education Act was passed in 1968. The Reagan administration has cut funding for bilingual programs drastically and may not request renewal of the act when it expires in 1984.

The major political motivation for opposition to bilingual education has been the fear that bilingual education encourages minority groups to maintain non-American cultural heritages which will both hinder the integration of these groups into American society and eventually foster cultural and political separatist movements similar to that of the Quebecois in Canada.

Proponents of bilingual education tend to dismiss these fears and argue that bilingual education enables students to develop language skills they need to integrate into the society and maintain their cultural heritage. From this perspective cultural pluralism is a positive asset for the nation.

To defend bilingual education advocates are organizing parents to support bilingual programs. This report examines efforts being made in New York City to draw Hispanic parents into the bilingual education movement. Parent involvement has included a wide variety of educational and political endeavors. The more parents become involved, the more they themselves have become transformed and made cultural adaptations to American society. The process has led parents to participate in the

activities of public educational and political organizations in ever widening arenas starting in local schools and extending to district, city, state, and national levels. In supporting bilingual education Hispanic parents have begun to weave themselves into the fabric of American society.

Rather than foster cultural or political separatism, the report concludes that efforts to involve Hispanic parents in the bilingual education movement have contributed to their cultural and social integration. What is to be feared is not bilingual education but rather the separatism which will result if bilingual education is rejected.

The Organizing of Parents
to Support Bilingual Education

The future of bilingual education in the United States is in doubt. Most of the legislative and financial support for bilingual programs over the past decade have come from the federal government. In recent years this support has been eroded. Soon after taking office in 1981, Secretary of Education Terrel M. Bell withdrew regulations which had been proposed to guide public schools in ensuring equal access to an education for language minority students. These regulations would have established bilingual education, as well as special English language training, as a means for the nation's school districts to provide an equal educational opportunity to language minority students. Subsequently, the Department of Education also began to cut drastically its funding of bilingual programs. Between 1980 and 1982 federal spending on bilingual education was reduced by 28 percent from \$192 million to \$138 million.

Federal aid for bilingual education is likely to be reduced even further in the near future. For 1983 the Department of Education proposes to spend only \$95 million on programs for students with limited English proficiency and to drop the requirement that students in these programs receive at least some instruction in their native languages. School districts are to be allowed to choose whatever approach they deem appropriate to meet the needs of their students such as immersion in English or

English as a second language classes, neither of which makes use of the students' native language. Further, the government proposes to give priority to funding programs targeted at approximately 1.2 million students whose dominant language is other than English. This focus would exclude an estimated 2.3 million other limited English proficiency students who, despite their limited proficiency, use English as their dominant language, rather than their native tongue.(1) Given this trend to reduce both the scope and level of support for bilingual education, advocates of the programs fear that the Reagan administration may not request reauthorization of the Bilingual Education Act when it comes up for renewal before the Congress of 1984.

Educational interest groups and professionals who have led the fight for many years to develop and establish bilingual education have begun to organize a campaign to protect their programs. That many of the leaders of this movement are involved in administering or teaching in bilingual programs has left them open to the criticism that they are only fighting to save their own jobs. One of the most frequent attacks on federally supported bilingual education has been that it is really a minority teacher employment program.(2) Sensitive to criticism of self-interest and mindful of the need for broader political support, the advocates of bilingual education have begun to direct their efforts toward developing a constituency of vocal and active parents. According to Awilda Orta, the Director of the Office of Bilingual Education in New York City, obtaining the active

involvement of parents in the defense of bilingual education is now "the number one priority." (3)

The incorporation of parents into the formulation of educational policy is, of course, not new. What may be new, however, is the attempted large scale involvement of parents who do not speak English as their native language. The nucleus of this group of parents is comprised of American citizens from many ethnic minority groups but predominantly those of Hispanic background. Since the revisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 this group has been augmented with large and growing numbers of non-English speaking immigrants. Like their children, most of these parents must cope with not being proficient in English when they attempt to integrate their lives into the rest of American society.

A concern of many opponents of bilingual education is that by offering educational instruction in languages other than English these programs maintain language barriers which separate members of language minority groups from other Americans. The fear is that, because of bilingual education, members of minority language groups will remain dependent on their native language and not learn enough English to break out of ethnic enclaves. The frustrations of social inequality and blocked economic advancement resulting from this isolation may ultimately lead these groups to create separatist political movements like that of the French speaking Quebecois in Canada. From this perspective the organizing of parents to support bilingual education would be a dangerous first step toward the creation of a separatist political movement in the United States.

Information about the extent and nature of the involvement of language minority parents in promoting bilingual education around the nation is only fragmentary. In general, it appears that parents have tended to focus their activities in the local districts where their children attend school, but they are also beginning to participate in policy debates in city, state, and national arenas. Among a multitude of different activities parents campaign in local school board elections, sit on state governor's advisory councils, testify before the Congress, and sit on the boards of national advocacy associations. Their activities receive support and guidance from a variety of sources, including government sponsored programs, professional associations, community political groups, and parent organizations. It is still too early to determine the ultimate scope of these activities. There are no centralized organizations which either coordinate parent involvement or collect and distribute information about parent organizing nationwide. More important than the scarcity of information most attempts to organize parents are in their early stages and their potential is not yet fully known. Nevertheless, it has been possible to learn a great deal about the impact which current organizing efforts are having on parents through a close examination of activities in one region.

In order to determine how language minority parents are being organized to support bilingual education and what impact these organizing efforts have, this research project undertook an investigation of the efforts to organize Hispanic parents in New York City. It should be noted that this investigation was carried

out primarily by interviewing the organizers of parents rather than the parents who were organized. Much of what is presented here about parents' attitudes toward bilingual education and their involvement in the bilingual education movement is filtered through the perspectives of teachers, coordinators and directors of bilingual programs, and the leaders of parent and community organizations which support bilingual education. Although parent involvement was observed in numerous classes, school workshops, and district and citywide conferences, only a few parents were interviewed directly about their experiences. One result of this research bias is that advocacy efforts initiated by parents independent of professional educators do not receive as much attention as they would have been given if the investigation had focused more on the parents themselves.

The research explored four general questions:

1. How do advocates of bilingual education perceive parents' interests and attitudes toward education?
2. What does the organizing process entail and how are parents affected?
3. What are the scope and limitations of involving parents in the bilingual education movement?
4. In what policy direction is the need for public support likely to push the bilingual education movement?

The results of this inquiry reveal that when language minority parents become involved in efforts to support bilingual education, they themselves are transformed in the process. The parents are challenged to adopt new cultural modes of behavior and to establish equally new sets of social and political relationships.

Far from threatening to lay the basis for ethnic enclaves or separatist political movements, the organizing of minority parents to support bilingual education promotes their integration into American society.

The Organizing of Hispanic Parents in New York City:
A Case Study

An intensive investigation of how Hispanic parents in New York City are being drawn into efforts to support bilingual education has offered an opportunity to examine aspects of this process which not only have significance beyond this case but also would have been lost in a broader and more superficial study which would have included additional minority language groups and other regions. The reason for choosing to look at organizing efforts aimed at Hispanics is simply that Hispanics have led efforts throughout the nation to create bilingual programs and they comprise the largest group of program participants. This is not to suggest a stereotypic view which ignores cultural differences between Hispanic groups who have different ancestries or who live in different parts of the country. Whatever their differences Hispanics from all backgrounds are linked by their shared Spanish language background and their concern for bilingual education. Of roughly 2.3 million children in the United States recently estimated to have had a limited proficiency in English, 74 percent were Hispanic, (4) as were more than 80 percent of the children enrolled in the nation's bilingual programs. (5) Similarly, a reason for selecting New York as the setting is that this city administers the largest

bilingual program in the nation, serving about 70,000 students. Approximately 80 percent of these students are Hispanic.(6) Because of the magnitude of the New York City programs and the Hispanic population which they affect, the outcome of organizing parents here is likely to become a model which will have a great influence on similar attempts to organize parents elsewhere in the country.

By focusing on the organizing of parents in one region it has been possible to examine their activities on many levels, including individual schools, districts, city, state, and nation. Further, it has been possible to observe the process by which parents are first involved in bilingual education, how their involvement extends to broader levels, and how parents are affected by these activities. Most of the examples of parent organizing here come from Manhattan (especially Community School Districts 3, 4, and 6) where parents have been said to be somewhat more active in support of bilingual programs than parents in other parts of New York. These efforts have changed the parents' personal lives and integrated them into many levels and aspects of the American educational and political structures.

A question remains about how representative the organizing of Hispanic parents in New York City may be for the rest of the country. Certainly, it cannot be assumed that the attitudes of these parents are the same as those of parents from other language minority groups or even of other Hispanic groups. How New York's Puerto Rican and Dominican parents feel about bilingual education and maintaining their children's Spanish

language skills is frequently influenced by a desire to return to the Caribbean. Return migration is not a significant factor, however, for Cuban refugees in Florida who do not wish to return to Cuba or for Mexican-Americans whose original ancestry ties them to the Southwest of the United States rather than Mexico. The representative aspects of the New York case come not so much from the parents themselves but more from the educational and political structures which shape their involvement.

Because bilingual education programs depend on public funds which must be obtained from local, city, state, and federal resources, efforts to establish or defend these programs necessarily draw advocates into educational and political forums at each of these levels. While educational policies and the availability of resources differ by level and region -- e.g. some states forbid instruction in any language but English while others mandate bilingual classes -- all advocates must work within the similar basic educational and political structures to obtain public resources. As a result the basic organizational activities and process by which parents become advocates for bilingual education in New York City are likely to be similar for other language minority group parents in other regions of the country.

Educational and Political Aspects of Organizing Parents

Ideally in a democratic political system, if parents are interested or concerned about the quality of their children's education, it is only natural for them to become involved in the

planning and implementation of educational policies. A natural progression of parents' involvement starts by helping their children at home and progresses to becoming involved in the implementation of programs and the determination of policies on higher levels beginning with local schools and extending to the school district, city, state and national levels. If this sequence of events seems natural it is because the broadening of activities on the part of parents reflects both an increasing knowledge of the educational system and a continuing desire to have a greater impact on the shaping of both educational policies and the allocation of public resources. The effort of advocates for bilingual education to muster parent support for their programs is an attempt both to encourage and to guide the natural concerns and participation of parents in both education and politics.

There is, of course, a wide variation among individual educational professionals with regard to their own knowledge and interest in influencing either parents or the political process which shapes bilingual programs. For many parents, or at least for Hispanic parents in Manhattan, the education professionals most likely to have a direct impact on their involvement in the schools are bilingual program coordinators. Coordinators are responsible not only for supervising bilingual teachers and classes but also for acting as a liason for their programs between the schools and the surrounding minority language community. Although the coordinators' chief responsibilities to the surrounding community are to explain the goals and operation

of bilingual programs to parents and to help resolve day to day administrative problems, the coordinators frequently are pressed into a multitude of other intermediary roles as they are often the only administrative personnel in the schools who speak the parents' language. In their position as mediators between the schools and the parents, bilingual coordinators can have extensive influence over parents' views and their participation in the educational process as a whole. The extent to which coordinators try to encourage parent involvement and the guidance which they offer generally reflects their own individual interests and political perspectives as well as the educational philosophy of a local districts' bilingual program director and the local school board.

The ten bilingual program coordinators interviewed for this study each described a wide range of personal goals and activities involving parents. One coordinator talked about years of working extra hours every week to organize evening workshops and weekend meetings for parents in order to prepare them for district political battles to win improvements in the local bilingual programs. He hoped that his efforts would eventually lead the parents to participate in lobbying efforts in Albany to strengthen state laws and increase funding for bilingual education. Another coordinator insisted that she is an educator and not a politician. She lamented the fact that political matters take up her time and said she believes that continual political controversy keeps many parents from becoming involved in her workshops to train parents to help children improve their

reading skills. The attitudes and efforts of the other coordinators with regard to the involvement of parents lie somewhere between these highly political and strictly educational orientations. Coordinators' concerns vary according to their sophistication, training and experience, political perspective, and the time they have available to devote to educational policy.

In the following discussion of efforts by advocates of bilingual education to involve parents in bilingual programs it must be kept in mind that "involvement" is used to denote a wide variety of different educational and political activities. These activities include parents helping their children to learn both at home and in the classrooms, participating in the design and implementation of programs through advisory and evaluation committees, independently intervening in policy determination in local school boards, putting political pressure on city administrators through community groups and politicians, and debating about national policies in the conferences of professional associations. This list of parent activities follows a sequence which begins with primarily educational interests and progresses to increasingly political concerns as the scope shifts from a local to a national focus.

In tracing the evolution of parent involvement from educational to political activities and from local to national levels it is often not clear to what extent parents are stimulated and led by educators or motivated by their own interests and channeled by the structures of the educational and political system. Parent interest and independent initiative are

obviously important, but the focus here is on the impact and role of educators and other advocates of the bilingual education movement.

The Attitudes of Hispanic Parents Toward Bilingual Education

The educational interests of most Hispanics in New York are strongly influenced by their having migrated to the city from the Caribbean. Starting in the late 1940's, Puerto Ricans were the earliest Hispanic group to settle in New York in large numbers. Refugees and immigrants from Cuba and the Dominican Republic were next. They were followed by smaller numbers from every country in Latin America, most notably by Colombians and Ecuadorians. By 1970 1.28 million Hispanics comprised 16.2 percent of New York City's population. Although the city's population declined over the next decade, due to immigration the number of Hispanics increased to 1.41 million or 19.9 percent of the population by 1980.(7)

The influx of Hispanics to New York City has been reflected in the city's student population. In 1970 Hispanic children comprised 26.2 percent of the total student enrollment of 1.1 million. By 1981 the total student enrollment had declined in size to 0.9 million, but the percentage of Hispanics had risen to 31.1 percent.(8) Hispanic students have been even more highly concentrated in the school districts of Manhattan. Here, they make up 49.1 percent of the student body.(9)

According to bilingual coordinators in Manhattan, one of the first concerns of Hispanic parents settling in New York is that

they and their children learn English as quickly as possible. Although it is possible to get by in some of New York's neighborhoods and job markets speaking only Spanish, most Hispanics are said to believe that English is a prerequisite for both economic and social success. Within the context of this concern, one of the first educational issues which Hispanic parents must confront is whether or not they want their children to be in a bilingual program.

Within a week after they are enrolled in school, Hispanic children are required to be tested with a Language Assessment Battery (the LAB test) to measure their proficiency in both Spanish and English. As part of a consent decree resulting from a court case brought by ASPIRA of New York, the local office of a national Puerto Rican organization, against the Board of Education of the City of New York in 1974, Spanish dominant students whose LAB test scores in English are below the 21st percentile are entitled to a program including not only intensive English instruction (such as English as a second language or ESL courses), but also subject area instruction in Spanish (such as math, science, or social studies) and Spanish language classes. Spanish speaking students are expected to remain in these bilingual programs until they can learn effectively in English at which point their continued participation in the program remains optional. If parents choose, they can withdraw their children from a bilingual program but, at a minimum, the children are supposed to receive intensive English instruction.(10)

The reactions of Hispanic parents to bilingual education has

not been uniform. According to the LAB tests of the 1991-1992 school year, one of every four Hispanic children was limited in his or her English proficiency and entitled to bilingual education. Parent response was mixed. On the one hand, parents withdrew 16 percent of their entitled children from bilingual programs or refused to transfer them to schools in their district where bilingual programs were provided.(11) On the other hand, some parents "opted" their children into bilingual programs even though their children were not classified by the LAB test as having limited proficiency in English. Citywide figures are not available for these voluntary participants, but in District 3, where bilingual programs are said to be particularly popular, the district's Bilingual Program director said that more than half the children in his program are "opted in."

Bilingual program coordinators explain the variation in parent's attitudes toward bilingual education as being the result of a number of factors including the parent's economic status, immigration status, educational background, political philosophy, conception of the family, their own language skills, and finally, their knowledge about how bilingual programs work. The coordinators cited numerous examples of how these factors are interrelated.* For example, Hispanic parents who have learned English, attained economic success, and expect to remain in the United States may feel that it is not important for their children to learn Spanish and they prefer an all English program.

*Note that many of these perceptions are consistent with the findings of the survey of Hispanics in New York City and Los Angeles presented in the accompanying report by Stephen Cole and Ann Cole.

Immigrants who have not attained economic success or who are considering returning to the Caribbean will probably want their children to maintain their knowledge of Spanish and will favor bilingual education. Some immigrants retain a traditional notion of an extended family where grandparents play an important role in raising their grandchildren. To foster a close relationship with Spanish speaking grandparents parents may put their children in bilingual classes. Some parents favor bilingual education as a means of preserving their ethnic identity from becoming lost while in a non-hispanic culture. Because of ethnic discrimination in the United States, some Hispanics see the preservation of their culture as a way of maintaining the group solidarity needed to win equal rights with other Americans. Indeed, ethnic politics is seen to be an American tradition which Hispanics first learned from the Black civil rights movement.

Coordinators say that misconceptions about bilingual education and worry that children are not learning English quickly frequently lead parents to withdraw their children from the program. An illustration was provided by a coordinator who works with Dominican immigrants. She said that recently arrived Dominicans usually want to have their children learn English as rapidly as possible. When their children are still doing homework in Spanish after three months in a bilingual program, the parents become anxious that the children are not being taught English and pull them out of the program.

All of the coordinators are confident that if they have an opportunity to explain to Hispanic parents the rationale and

basic elements of bilingual education, the parents will want their children to be in the programs. This explanation usually includes the following points: first, that their children will learn English but that it will take at least a few years before they become proficient; second, that the children will receive a better education and not fall behind other students if they continue to be taught basic subjects in Spanish while they learn English; and finally, that learning in their own language nurtures children's self confidence and, thus, their ability to learn and work later in all English environments. Many coordinators go further and stress the value for Hispanic students to learn about their culture as a means of giving them an understanding and respect for their background, themselves, and other Hispanics. Whether Hispanic parents are convinced by this reasoning or not, the coordinators contend that the majority of parents are open to the idea of placing their children in the programs. It is this openness which the advocates of bilingual education cultivate when they attempt to involve parents in supporting educational and political aspects of the programs.

The Process of Parent Involvement:

Although bilingual program coordinators in New York may have in mind different educational or political goals with regard to parent involvement, they express a remarkably uniform belief that Hispanic parents hold traditional attitudes toward education which must be changed before the parents will become involved in their children's educational process. Changing the parents'

attitudes implies a cultural transformation equal and in many ways parallel to the education of children in bilingual programs in that both processes entail the adoption of new cultural forms of behavior needed for participation in the American educational and political systems.

According to the coordinators, when Hispanic children first enter the schools, most parents do not expect to take a significant role in their childrens' education. Hispanic parents feel they have no business interfering in the schools. "In the Carribean, teachers are very important people in the community and parents would never think of telling them what to do with the children," explained a Puerto Rican coordinator. "It's not like here where teachers are not given so much respect." After describing similar conversations coordinators add that parents give their authority to the teachers. "The parents tell their kids that teachers are second parents and to do whatever the teacher says," said one coordinator. "Then they tell the teachers to do whatever they have to do so the kids will obey, including hitting them."

Additional factors related to migration are also said to inhibit many Hispanic parents from involvement in the schools. As relative newcomers to a neighborhood, migrants are often uncertain about how to conduct themselves in an unfamiliar environment. Illegal immigrants especially might be worried about public exposure, even though the New York City Board of Education has declared that their children have a right to attend public schools. Further, many Hispanic parents come from poor

backgrounds and have limited experience with education. Not only do they feel uncomfortable in encounters with middle class professionals, but they often do not have a clear understanding of what the educational process involves. Finally, many parents confront the same problems as their children: they do not speak English very well and are often embarrassed to speak in public. Culture, class, immigrant status, educational background and language all may tend to limit involvement by Hispanic parents in the schools.

In recognition of these obstacles many coordinators reach out to Hispanic parents by offering to help them with their own educational needs. Many school districts with large Hispanic populations offer parents workshops to improve their English skills or to prepare for high school equivalency exams. At one grade school in District 3, for example, a leaflet was sent out to Hispanic parents announcing that the year's first workshop would provide information about English lessons as well as the children's reading curriculum and parent leadership in the school. Prior to the meeting the school's bilingual coordinator explained the need to draw in the parents, "I've sent out notices for meetings to 500 parents and had only 5 show up. The Hispanic students in this school come from poor families and most of the parents have only a little education. They're not like the middle class parents who come in on their own. You've got to get to know them, socialize, meet them outside the school, and make them feel comfortable. We hold the ESL classes for them in the mornings so they can come in when they bring their kids to the school."

The workshop was attended the following week by about 30 parents all but 4 of whom were women. Some of the parents greeted each other in Spanish and English while obvious newcomers sat and stared uncomfortably waiting for the meeting to start. They were welcomed in Spanish by the president of the Parents Bilingual Association, a predominantly Hispanic organization which is separate from the regular Parents Association, and encouraged to bring up whatever concerns they might have about their children or the schools. In addition to supplying information about how the parents could enroll in English classes, the bilingual coordinator and other speakers talked about a wide range of topics related to parental involvement in education: the value of parents reading to their children; how to recognize physical handicaps; the need to adjust to cultural differences between the Caribbean and the United States (there sweethearts are not allowed to be alone together; here kids get married overnight); the right of parents to know what is in their children's school records, etc. The parents were shown a film strip about children's legal rights to education and told that parents can have an impact on the schools through the Bilingual Parents Association. Before the meeting broke up, the parents had a chance to talk informally over coffee and cookies.

Through workshops like this one, the bilingual program coordinators hope to get some parents interested and involved in the educational process inside the schools. "Many parents are lazy and prefer to stay home and watch the soap operas," one coordinator complained, "but others come on class trips, cook

ethnic foods for international celebration days, or help out in the classroom." The coordinator claimed that studies show that children perform better in the schools if their parents take some role in school activities. While this coordinator saw the main value of parental participation to be directly related to children's learning, she expects the workshops to create a group of parents to whom she can turn for help in solving administrative problems which might arise in the bilingual program.

The involvement of parents in finding solutions to administrative problems in a bilingual program frequently leads them from educational to political activities. In an Intermediate School in District 3, for example, a group of parents who entered a dispute over a class room ended up opposing tenure for the school's principal. The principal had assigned one bilingual class to a basement classroom with inadequate desks and chairs and no windows. In the process of organizing to change the room assignment the parents became increasingly concerned to learn that some class room materials were not available and that teacher vacancies in other bilingual classes were not being filled. After it became known that the school had one of the highest student suspension rates in the city and that most of the suspended students were Hispanic and Black, many parents concluded that the principal was biased against Hispanics and the bilingual program. When the principal was being considered for tenure later in the year, a group of the parents lobbied through

the Bilingual Parents Association with members of the district school board to block her continued appointment.

As parents become involved with the administration of bilingual programs, they are more likely to confront policy issues that affect the whole school district. A major question which affects all bilingual programs is whether or not they will stress the transition of children into all English programs as quickly as possible or encourage children to remain in the bilingual program and maintain their Spanish language abilities even after they are proficient in English. Within the context of both New York City's decentralized school system and the provisions of the ASPIRA consent decree, school districts may adopt either policy.

In District 6 the debate over maintenance versus transitional programs drew Hispanic parents into a campaign to have an Hispanic appointed as district superintendent. According to the district's bilingual program director, at least two thirds of the bilingual program staff favor a maintenance program but the district's policy has been to support only transitional classes. The differences in points of view are related to questions of resource allocation as well as educational values.

Part of the conflict goes back to 1974 when bilingual classes were mandated by the ASPIRA consent decree. At this time, New York City was going through a budget crisis and regular teachers were being laid off just when the schools were being required to hire bilingual teachers. Bilingual teachers say that administrators still resent the bilingual program and try to

limit its use of funds and job slots by encouraging parents to put their children in all English classes.

Another aspect of the conflict arises from different attitudes toward speaking Spanish. Bilingual teachers say that some administrators in the district see bilingual education as a compensatory program designed to overcome a language handicap. From this point of view speaking Spanish is a liability rather than an asset. Principals and teachers in the English program are said to have communicated their deprecation of Spanish in various ways such as ordering students not to speak Spanish in the halls or telling parents, "Your child is bright; he doesn't need to be in a bilingual class."

Whether or not Community School District 6 will offer maintenance or transitional bilingual programs is a policy issue which ultimately will be determined by the district school board which sets policy guidelines and appoints the district superintendent and school principals with advice from the parents. Workshops sponsored by bilingual programs have been one channel through which parents in District 6 have become aware of the importance of the district school board and entered into fights to select district officials. In one school, for example, the bilingual coordinator said that she had recruited parents for her program's Parent Advisory Committee from participants in her English workshops. One man went on from the Parent Advisory Committee to be elected president of the Parents Association and a member of the district's principal screening committee. Other parents joined the Parents Association after volunteering to help

out in bilingual classes. When the District 6 school board met last summer to appoint a new district superintendent these and other parents who had been involved in the bilingual programs joined with Hispanic community groups and successfully pressured the board to select a Hispanic woman who is more supportive of maintenance programs than the previous superintendent. Next year there will be elections for the school board. Even though the student body is 74 percent Hispanic, Hispanic parents have never been a majority on the board. With the growing participation of parents brought into the schools through the bilingual program, the coordinator hopes Hispanic representation on the school board and support for maintenance programs will increase in the future.

The process of parent involvement as described by bilingual teachers and coordinators typically follows a sequence starting with involvement in educational activities in a school and progressing to districtwide political activities. Awilda Orta, now the Director of the Office of Bilingual Education for New York City described how this process worked at "Jailhouse 99", as students affectionately called the school in District 4 where she was the principal. First parents entered the school by participating in the assembly program where they helped to organize a band and theater program. These activities led some parents to join the Parents Advisory Council and committees which had a role in supervising the lunch program, budget formulation, and other school functions. The next step was for the parents to become part of the districtwide advisory council. Orta summarized the process: "First the parents learned to identify with the

school; then they became aware of their children's educational rights; and then they became politically active. With willing parents the process takes two to three years." (12) For some parents the process continues and, as will be illustrated later, they become involved in citywide, state and national debates. As the arenas of parent involvement extend from the home to the classroom, the school, the district, and beyond, the educational and political issues often cannot be separated. "Until bilingual instruction becomes a standard, institutionalized part of our schools," said one coordinator, "let's face it, it's going to be a political issue."

Bilingual education is not unique in being a politicized issue. The goals and content of the public school curricula have rarely been left as technical matters for professionals. In New York City the school system was decentralized over a decade ago partly because parents demanded the right to have a role in the administration and setting of school policies. The most important avenues of participation which were opened to parents include the rights to become classroom aides, to nominate candidates for the offices of district superintendents and principals, and to elect or be elected members of the local school boards.

The extent of participation by parents varies by district and school. In some areas parents are discouraged from involvement by educators and administrators who see themselves as professionals who can plan and implement school programs better without interference from untrained parents. Elsewhere education is treated more as a community process and parents are encouraged

to become involved. These opposing philosophies also exist among bilingual teachers and administrators. Because bilingual programs are controversial and frequently attacked, however, there is probably a greater tendency among bilingual professionals to foster parent involvement and support for the programs than among other school professionals.

Despite the original reluctance which Hispanic parents may have to becoming involved in the schools, teachers and coordinators in bilingual programs say parent participation has grown substantially on a district level over the past decade. Because involvement has often required parents to overcome cultural, social and political obstacles, the process takes years of development. One coordinator in District 3 who has been in the schools long enough to see many parents come and go estimated that most Hispanic parents need at least three to four years before they learn how to participate effectively in district educational debates. One teacher suggested that in her district parent involvement differs over generations. The first advocates for bilingual education were Puerto Ricans, she recalled. They were at first reluctant to enter into the schools, much less educational debates. Now, Puerto Rican parents are running for election to the school board. More recently, immigrants from the Dominican Republic have been moving into the district. The Dominicans are going through a similar process of settlement and adjustment as the Puerto Ricans did in the 1950's and 1960's. It is just a matter of time, she predicted, before the Dominicans learn to have an impact on the schools. One difference is that Dominicans will not have to learn by themselves. Since the 1950's

and especially since 1968 when the federal Bilingual Education Act was passed, numerous organizations have been created to train Hispanic parents and encourage their involvement in the educational and political aspects of bilingual education.

Organizational Support For Parent Involvement

Until recently the bilingual education movement in New York City has been comprised almost entirely of professional educators. The efforts to establish bilingual programs in the early 1970's was led by a network of academics, teachers, and administrators. Parents did not play a significant role.(13) Since this time the network has expanded and become tied to a growing number of organizations which are now attempting to incorporate parents into the movement. These organizations include government sponsored parent advisory committees and training programs, parent associations, political groups and professional associations which operate on local, city, state and national levels.

1. Advisory Committees and Training Programs:

Since the Bilingual Education Act was first passed by the Congress in 1968, the law has been amended twice to increase support for the participation of parents in bilingual education programs. The 1968 version of the law stated vaguely that funds could be awarded to projects which "establish clear cooperation between the school and the home." The 1974 and 1978 amendments describe parent involvement somewhat more clearly. The law now requires school officials to include the "consultation" and

"participation" of parent advisory committees (known as PACs) in designing and implementing every bilingual program funded by the federal government. Funding is also available for projects which train parents to participate in bilingual programs. The Bilingual Education Act lets local educational agencies receiving federal grants determine the nature and extent of consultation and participation by the PACs. Conceivably PACs could become a means by which parents establish a significant voice in choosing the policy orientations of local bilingual programs, but available evidence suggests that this rarely happens. The more usual functions of the PACs seem to be to help parents make cultural adjustments to participate in the schools, learn about the school system, and at times to play an advisory role in the implementation of bilingual programs.

Most PACs in New York City are intended to give parents a voice in school and district wide bilingual programs. While these PACs may have served an important function in drawing parents into the schools and teaching them about the educational process, conversations with teachers, coordinators, and directors of bilingual programs indicated that PACs do not give parents a very strong influence on the running of the programs. The experiences of parents in PACs in Districts 4 and 6 described above suggest that for parents who want a role in shaping district policies the PACs become stepping stones to parents associations and school board committees which are independent of the school authorities.

Studies of PACs elsewhere in the country indicate that when they have an active role in the schools, parent members tend to

be involved in cultural and administrative activities more than the determination of the programs or policy issues. The System Development Corporation undertook an intensive 16 week investigation of each of 13 PACs described by school officials as involving parents significantly in the "governance" of bilingual programs. Of the total number only 3 were finally judged to include parents in governance in more than a token role.(14)

Another study undertaken by Rodolfo Rodríguez of 15 PACs in Texas also found that parents rarely played a significant role in shaping program policies. He concluded that the majority of the PACs emphasized activities which would help the parents to "assimilate new knowledge and attitudes...The function of the committees...was not to advise on the direction of the bilingual program. Instead the focus was on improving or changing parent behavior." When asked what they believed their most important contributions to the schools' programs had been, parents typically listed activities like judging a holiday spirit contest, making Christmas decorations, and helping children get home assistance. Rodríguez suggests that school officials resist giving parents policy making roles unless they are forced to do so.(15)

The federal government funds programs which train parents and enable them to assert their rights of participation. One of these programs is run by Impact Institute which operates a training program entitled "Parent Involvement in Evaluation." The purpose of the program is to "increase parent involvement in the evaluation of local bilingual programs."(16) The program offers

regional and local workshops primarily to parents who are PAC members. The workshops are intended to train PAC members to assist teams of bilingual program professionals who must evaluate bilingual education programs. The training entails informing parents about the objectives of bilingual programs, measurements of achievement, and guidelines for carrying out evaluations. The parents in the training program also carry out a survey of what other parents know and think about the program, observe classroom activities, and prepare a written parent evaluation report of the program.

Providing parents with the ability to participate in the evaluation of bilingual programs is conceived of by at least one of Impact Institute's staff members as a process of cultural change for the parents. "Minority parents are disenfranchised because they are used to standing back and letting the schools do everything," she explained. "They don't realize that their own involvement can enhance their child's academic achievement." While training parents obviously empowers them to take a more determinative role in setting bilingual program policies, the politicization of the parents is not a goal of the training. "It's not an advocacy program," continued the staff member. "We train the parents to be objective and to understand the educational process. They take it from there and become change makers if they want to become change makers."

The federal government funds another parent training program operated by the New York City Office of Bilingual Education and called "Project Parents: Awareness, Education and Involvement

Program." This demonstration project is aimed not only at PAC members but at all the parents of children in the bilingual programs of four of New York City's school districts. The project promotes the involvement of parents in both educational and policy aspects of bilingual education. During the first year of this program Project Parents offered parents English and high school equivalency classes in their children's schools and conducted regular workshops to inform parents about the educational process: understanding school records, interpreting math scores, helping children to read, parent-child relations, and other topics. For the second year the goal was to provide parents with information which would enable them to become involved in more politically oriented activities: parent/teacher conferences, parent association meetings, and community school board meetings. Another goal was to send parent representatives to citywide, statewide, and nationwide conferences on bilingual education. The program is designed to give parents basic information about the school system which will enable them to intervene in policy debates should they choose to do so.

In their workshops, Project Parents staff members encourage parents to adapt themselves culturally to the school system. In a workshop on parental and community involvement held during a District 3 conference entitled "Bilingual Education: Enrichment for All," Project Parents representatives frequently compared what they saw as Hispanic and American attitudes and behavior. The meeting was held in Spanish and most of the 30 participants were Hispanic women. Summoning the meeting to order one of the

workshop leaders admonished the group, "Debemos adoptar esa mentalidad Americana: let's begin on time!" ("We should adopt the American attitude: let's begin on time!"). The discussion moved to the subject of how parents can help their children in the school. A Puerto Rican staff member said the first step is for parents to talk to their children. "American culture says listen to your child, but Latin culture doesn't say so. Rather it says kids are not yet complete human beings." After recommending two books published in English she then encouraged the parents to "Take American advice - read to your children."

Americans were also held up as role models for involvement in political activities, but not without reservations. The group was told by the representative of a parents organization that because the New York City Board of Education had recently taken actions which would hurt bilingual programs, Hispanic parents would have to defend the programs. "Hispanic parents do not usually fight as much as American parents, but parents and those who work with parents must make a commitment to fight for each dollar for their schools. This is no longer a time for international food tasting parties or dress making get-togethers, but for political action committees." To recruit new parents they were told to make organizing meetings sociable. "Make everyone feel welcome - otherwise they'll see it as Americano-frio." ("... American-cold").

The purpose in frequently holding up American attitudes and activities to Hispanic parents was not so much to encourage their assimilation into a supposed American culture but rather for them

to make those cultural adaptations which would enable them to effectively participate in the school system. Combining aspects of American and Hispanic cultures was embraced positively by the parents in the room. Toward the end of the meeting a father declared, "I am proud that my kids will learn to speak Spanish and English in a way that the Spanish is not destroyed." Everyone applauded.

When Project Parents held its 4th Annual Hispanic Parents Conference on Education this fall, the political interests of parents proved to be unpredictable. Most of the 265 conference participants had attended school workshops held by Project Parents over the past two years. As a result the organizers expected that many parents would want to begin planning strategies for the district school board elections which will take place next spring. Many of the workshops covered educational topics such as how to identify gifted students, child development between the ages of five and eleven, and grade promotion policies. An equal number covered more political topics such as how parents become political leaders, the rights of immigrant children to education, and the importance of maintaining and developing Spanish for Hispanic children. A special double room was reserved for the workshop on the school board elections but when the time came only ten parents showed up. Another workshop scheduled at the same time on communication between parents and adolescents was packed. Some fifty to sixty parents crowded into the small room and hung outside the door to hear a gregarious hospital worker discuss how parents can handle such delicate

subjects as physical changes in teenagers, masturbation, and dating. Again, a theme running through the discussion was the need for Hispanic parents to accept American cultural norms for their children which would be different from their own as adolescents in the Caribbean. As for the low turnout at the school board elections workshop, one of the conference planners said, "It's good for us to be suprised sometimes. It reminds us that we must learn from the parents and not get too far ahead of them."

2. Parent Organizations and Political Groups:

Although parent organizations have had a voice in educational policy debates on a citywide level for many years only recently have they involved Hispanic parents in debates over the city's bilingual education policy. The United Parents Associations (UPA), which was formed in 1921, is a federation of local parent associations and represents 400,000 parents. The UPA has supported bilingual education programs in the city for many years, but Hispanics make up only a small portion of the membership. United Bronx Parents was founded in the late 1960's to organize parent participation in the schools. The large majority of its members have been Puerto Ricans although some Dominicans and Black Americans have also joined. The organization supported community control of the schools when the school system was decentralized and helped establish one of the first bilingual education programs in New York City at P.S. 25 in the Bronx. More recently a parents organization was created

specifically to mobilize parents to support bilingual education. Parent Advocates for Bilingual Education (PABE) was founded approximately one and a half years ago and the organization has become the center of a network of parents and parent organizers in the city. At a conference held in District 3 last summer one of the leaders of PABE vowed to the bilingual teachers, coordinators, and other school officials present that, "We have just begun one of the most important tasks in the city to support bilingual education: to organize the parents movement. When it's time to fight, we will be there with you!" The time was already at hand. The parent organizations already mentioned above and others were mounting a campaign to force the New York City Board of Education to meet its obligations to bilingual education.

According to Miguel Martinez, the only Hispanic member of the New York City Board of Education, most of the other board members and the Chancellor of Education now give less support to bilingual education than in the past because they must cut the education budget and because they believe the program is not popular with parents. In June of 1982 the Chancellor, Frank J. Macchiarola, ordered principals of all the schools to send to parents whose children scored between the 10th and 20th percentile on the LAB test letters which advised them that,

Based on your child's test performance, you may choose to have him/her participate in a bilingual program or in a general program with instruction in English as a second language.

You are urged to contact the school immediately to arrange a meeting with your child's teacher and school principal to discuss appropriate placement.

The letters provoked a furor which has continued until today.

Advocates of bilingual education have interpreted the letters as an attempt on the part of the Chancellor to encourage parents to remove their children from the bilingual program. If true, his actions would be in violation of the terms of the ASPIRA consent decree of 1974 which, in compelling the city to establish bilingual programs, mandated not only that all students scoring below the 21st percentile in the LAB test are entitled to a bilingual program but also that,

Every effort is to be made to inform parents of the educational value of the program and no attempt is to be made to invite parents to withdraw their children from the program (17)

The Chancellor replied to one critic of the letters that,

...experience has demonstrated that students scoring in the 10-20 percentile on the L.A.B. test have acquired a degree of competence in English and may be best served by a general education program with instruction in English as a second language

and that he is only informing parents of their options.(18)

Fearful that the withdrawal of students from bilingual classes may be only the first step in dismantling the whole program, parent and political groups organized parents to protest the Chancellor's letters. Within a few days of the first letters having been sent out, PABE organized a demonstration of dozens of parents in front of the offices of the Board of Education. Since that time members of the organization have spoken out against the letters in parent training sessions, school workshops, and education conferences. Parent associations including PABE, United Bronx Parents, UPA and some local school parent associations have begun to collaborate with Hispanic political organizations to increase the strength of their protests.

In November, the Task Force to Defend Bilingual Education of the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights and the Community Association of Progressive Dominicans formed a coalition with the parents organizations in order to hold a second and larger public demonstration outside the Board of Education. A month later, more than six hundred parents, students, and representatives of various community groups were reported to have attended a rally sponsored by the coalition. One of the organizers stated, "We are demonstrating so that the Chancellor Frank Macchiarola knows that the community wants bilingual education for our children." (19)

These parent activities have been supported by lobbying and legal efforts on the part of other Hispanic organizations. For example the Puerto Rican Educators Association sent a letter of protest to the Chancellor. The Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, the attorneys for ASPIRA in the original consent decree, petitioned the District Court to hold the Board of Education in contempt. Congressman Robert Garcia met on behalf of the parents with both the Director of the city's Bilingual Education Office and the Chancellor.

In assuming a role as watch dog to protect bilingual programs against the vandalism of unsympathetic bureaucrats parents have advanced considerably beyond their educational roles in school workshops, training programs, and advisory committees. Parents on a picket line and parents on a PAC evaluation team are both overseeing and judging how programs are implemented but PABE and other parent organizations are independent of officially sanctioned and funded programs. Their protests are intended to

make their government responsive to their needs. That Hispanic parents join a picket line indicates not only that they have broken down cultural and other barriers which may have inhibited their participation in the school system but also that they see their own understanding of their needs and rights as being equal in importance to that of the school authorities. Further, in adapting their activities to the structure of the school system, the parents have recognized the important role of the Board of Education in implementing educational policies and extended their involvement from the level of local school districts to the city as a whole.

3. Professional Education Associations:

State and national associations of professional educators have encouraged parents to broaden the scope of their concerns and activities beyond the level of the city. According to News For Bilingual Parents, a newspaper published by Impact Institute,

After many years of attempting to break through the ranks of bilingual education's professional organizations and conferences, 1982 finally saw all of the major bilingual education conferences soliciting and receiving a great deal of involvement from language minority parents.(20)

These conferences brought parents from New York City and other regions of New York State and the country together to become acquainted with each others' efforts, consider state and national policy priorities, and begin to establish a national organization to support parent involvement in education.

The National Association for Bilingual Education took the lead in involving parents in its activities by designating a seat

on its executive board for a parent representative. The first candidate for this position from New York City was the president of the Bilingual Program Parent Board of District 3. Her candidacy was supported by her parents association, PABE, and the New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE).

At the beginning of the year NYSABE held a conference with special participation designed for parents. Although there is no membership category for parents in the organization bylaws, a day of conference sessions was set aside for the organizers of parents and parent leaders to present their perspectives on the role which parents can and should play in both education, program development, implementation, and policy formation. NYSABE organized more than twenty buses to bring parents to a resort hotel in the Catskill Mountains to participate in the conference. A large contingent of parents from Manhattan and leaders from citywide parent organizations attended.

A few months later in Detroit NABE gave similar attention to parent participation in its national conference. A special "Parent Involvement Institute" was set up during the conference for parents. General sessions were devoted to assessing the bilingual education policy of the Reagan administration while workshops and seminars focused mostly on the involvement of parents in local educational activities and in program implementation. State caucuses and a meeting of caucus leaders were scheduled for the end of the institute to compare programs and begin to establish national goals for parent involvement.

Despite the prominence given to parent involvement by state

and national bilingual educators associations, bilingual education and the role of Hispanic parents has not been given equal recognition by other educators associations. A mid-summer conference of the National Network of Hispanics for Public Education chose bilingual education and accountability of the schools for meeting children's needs as priority goals. Although parent organizers from New York attended the conference, significant numbers of Hispanic parents did not attend the conference nor was the need for their support for bilingual education emphasized. Even less support has been offered by the National Coalition for Parental Involvement in Education (NCPPIE). The coalition was formed recently to "improve children's success in education by promoting and advocating policies and practices that increase the involvement of parents in the educational process as it occurs in our public schools, in the home, and in our communities." This summer NCPPIE sponsored the First International Conference for Parent/Citizen Involvement in the schools. The conference theme was "Put the public back in education." Leaders from parent organizations in New York City who attended found that no minority group representative had been invited to a special "think tank" session intended to outline goals and strategies for the future and that promoting bilingual education was not one of the priorities adopted for the coming year. One participant felt that because the NCPPIE was formed by national organizations which have not traditionally been supportive of parent involvement that the coalition "might not be the right amalgam to foster the growth of the parent/citizen

involvement movement" or become a voice for parents who support bilingual education.

Bilingual educators still have their work cut out for them to have bilingual education and the participation of minority language group parents accepted in their profession. The extent to which educators and parents associations can help each other in this effort remains to be seen. Given the lack of widespread support for bilingual education or parent involvement on a national level it is not too surprising that there still does not exist an independent national parents organization which supports bilingual education.

Conclusion: Future Strategies for Parent Involvement

The efforts by advocates of bilingual education to organize toward the incorporation of the nation's largest language minority group into the educational and political structures of American society. Advocates of bilingual programs have encouraged Hispanic parents to adapt their cultural attitudes and behavior to the American educational and political system. As part of this cultural transformation Hispanic parents have become more intimately involved with their children's education both at home and in the schools. Parents have also occasionally played important roles as participants and critics in school programs. Through their involvement in the schools, parents have been enabled to assert their voices independently as advocates for educational policies which they feel to be in the interest of their children. Bilingual education advocates have assisted

educational and political efforts of Hispanic parents to have an impact at all levels of our society: school, district, state, and nation. Rather than reject American culture or create a separatist political movement as critics have feared, the bilingual education movement has woven Hispanics more tightly into the social fabric.

The efforts to involve Hispanic parents in bilingual education may have already had a significant impact on their social integration, but the movement is still young. The number of Hispanic parents who have become actively involved in either educational or political aspects of bilingual education is very small compared to the large number whose children are, or could be, enrolled in bilingual programs.

Although bilingual education advocates feel that substantial cultural and social obstacles inhibit Hispanic parents from participating in the bilingual education movement, they believe that the biggest obstacles which block increased parent involvement are inadequate resources and the lack of public acceptance for the programs.

Government funding enables bilingual program personnel and parent outreach programs to play a key role in drawing parents into the schools. These activities help parents to help their children in the learning process both at home and in the classroom. Further, the programs train parents to play a supportive, though rarely a determinative, role in the design and implementation of bilingual programs. Funds for these minimal but basic educational activities are scarce. Most schools do not

have bilingual program coordinators or, if they do, the coordinators' duties are spread out over a number of schools. Programs like Project Parents which provide the schools with additional resources to organize parent workshops can have only a limited impact because they are given only limited funds. Project Parents is designed to reach only 455 parents in four school districts, a miniscule portion of the parents of the 70,000 students enrolled in bilingual programs in 32 school districts.

Even more problematic for the development of parent involvement is the scarcity of resources available to support political activities. Government funded programs in the schools tend to focus parent activities on issues of educational process and program implementation rather than on policy intervention. To undertake political activities parents usually must depend on independent organizations and their own resources. The majority of Hispanics in New York are poor. Their average income is lower than any other major ethnic group in the city. While personal poverty certainly limits the ability of parents to participate in school board activities, to fill an office in the parents association, or run for election to the school board, poverty places even greater limits on parents' ability to sustain participation in citywide, state and national activities which require extra time and money. Independent parents associations which organize Hispanic parents to undertake political activities do not have a wealthy enough membership base on which to build long term campaigns in support of bilingual education in all the

legislatures and other arenas where policy issues are decided.

Another element which adds to the difficulty of organizing parents for any cause related to their childrens' education and not only for bilingual education is that the parents' commitments usually last for the years that their children attend school or for the few short years they are likely to be in a bilingual program. As a result new parents must constantly be drawn into the movement and trained to take the place of those who have left. For those Hispanic parents who have little knowledge of the educational process because their own education was of short duration, learning in a short time enough about the educational system to intervene in policy debates requires an exceptional interest and effort. Parents do commit themselves to such efforts but because of their limited experience they depend upon the leadership of educational professionals to set clear goals.

The parent organizations which independently challenged the policy of the Chancellor of the Board of Education of the City of New York were reacting in protest to protect existing programs in an emergency rather than setting out to implement a planned strategy for institutionalizing a coherent and agreed upon program of bilingual education. Although leadership might come from other community groups or political movements, educators believe with good reason that they must provide parents with a rationale and goals for the bilingual education movement.

Bilingual educators have had difficulty casting the goals of bilingual education in a positive light for Hispanic parents, other educators, and the American public as a whole. One of the

major frustrations of program advocates has been that because bilingual education has usually been presented to the public as a compensatory program designed to make up for the language deficiencies of minority groups, the positive contributions of the programs have been diminished. The contribution which bilingual programs make to the education of minority children by nurturing their sense of cultural identity and worth have been attacked. Critics charge that bilingual education reinforces a cultural identity which is not associated with English and which undermines the American culture, which should be shared by the entire nation. Many proponents of bilingual education reject this criticism. They believe that the existence of a single American culture is a myth and that the nation's cultural strength is derived from cultural pluralism rather than homogeneity. They regret that the branding of bilingual education as un-American has tended to neutralize the persuasiveness of their most positive argument for bilingual programs.

Many advocates of bilingual education in New York feel that recent attempts to define the language needs of the nation provide a new context in which positive contributions of bilingual education can be presented without arousing so much opposition. At the end of 1979 the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies published a report which contends that "Americans' incompetence in foreign languages is nothing short of scandalous, and it is becoming worse." The Commission described this language incompetence as a threat to the national security and criticized the nation's failure to take

advantage of the non-English language skills of immigrants:

The President's Commission believes that our lack of foreign language competence diminishes our capabilities in diplomacy, in foreign trade, and in citizen comprehension of the world in which we live and compete. Americans' unwillingness to learn foreign languages is often viewed by others, not without cause, as arrogance. The melting-pot tradition that denigrates immigrants' maintenance of their skill to speak their native tongue still lingers, and this unfortunately causes linguistic minorities at home to be ignored as a potential asset. (21)

To build up the country's limited language proficiency the Commission recommended a \$180 million program which would recognize the bilingualism of immigrants as "an important national resource."

The National Advisory Council on Bilingual Education has not only embraced the notion of a national multi-language education policy but has also outlined the contribution which could be made by an expansion of bilingual education programs. In its fifth annual report the council points out that the current Bilingual Education Act does not support bilingual education beyond the point where students can effectively function in English. The report argues that this limitation,

...is evidence that the law makers failed to recognize the one important asset that these children bring into the classroom - the ability to speak their native language. Rather than encouraging the further development of that language capacity, the basis for the Bilingual Education Act either consciously or unconsciously seeks to eliminate that asset. (22)

The Council recommended revising the Bilingual Education Act not only to encourage the maintenance of the native language skills of non-language speakers but also to allow English speaking

students to enroll in bilingual programs to learn a foreign language.

Toward this goal of multiple-language competence, the concept of bilingual education must also be viewed differently. Bilingual education can no longer be seen as a compensation for English language deficit, but must be viewed as a vehicle to meet the English-language-training needs of language-minority children, as well as a possible means of teaching English-language-background children a second language. (23)

The contribution which bilingual education can make to the development of foreign language competence has been recognized by a wide range of academic and political leaders. (24)

Whether or not placing emphasis on the contributions which bilingual programs can make to the national interest as well as to national language minority groups will win broad public support remains to be seen, but it is a strategy which is already being adopted with some success in education programs in New York. The bilingual program in District 3, for example, is based on the belief that bilingual education is a suitable method for any student to learn two languages. In the District 3 newspaper an article entitled "Bilingual Education is for All" describes the program:

Have you ever thought of enrolling your child in a bilingual program? Perhaps it crossed your mind, but you thought that Spanish/English or French/English programs were meant to benefit only non-English speaking pupils. While it is true that non-English speaking children are afforded an opportunity to develop their English language skills in bilingual education classrooms and are exposed to a multicultural curriculum, the course can be an enriching experience for all pupils. Most bilingual classrooms in Community School District 3 are mixed both linguistically and academically. This is to say that in a typical bilingual classroom there are children who are learning Spanish or French for the first time

as a second language, as well as children who are fluent in these languages and who are learning English as a second language. (25)

According to the Director of District 3's bilingual education program more than 50 percent of the students enrolled in the program are not defined by LAB tests to be limited in their English proficiency. Although almost all of the students in the program are of Hispanic background, most are using the program to develop Spanish language skills rather than to compensate for not knowing English. Although non-Hispanic parents are said to be supportive of the district's bilingual programs, they have not yet used them extensively to enable their children to learn Spanish as a foreign language.

In New York State the Board of Regents recently proposed a new education program called "Education for a Global Perspective" which would make learning a second language mandatory for all students in the state's public school system. The plan is based on the premise that more than for many other states, New York's economic welfare depends upon "its position as a world trade, information, service, manufacturing and financial center." Further, "New York has twice the national average of persons who speak a language other than English at home." The plan is intended to integrate New York's "unparalleled resource" of international language skills with its international economic activities. "The goal is to prepare a multilanguage population." (26) One of the models for this program has been District 19 in New York City which adopted the policy a couple of years ago that all children in the district's public schools would have to learn

a foreign language. In addition to 3,400 students with limited English proficiency, there are now 20,300 other students in the district taking special language classes.

According to Awilda Orta, the director of the Office of Bilingual Education for New York City, the adoption of the plan "Education for a Global Perspective" would provide a general context which would be helpful in promoting bilingual education as one method for developing and maintaining the state's language proficiency.(27) She is distrustful of attempts to hide bilingual programs from controversy by incorporating them into broader language programs. "People say that bilingual education is a politicized term now, so we should find another word for it," she said at a conference of parents and educators. "Why? Because it is pushed by Hispanics?" Nevertheless, she and other leaders of the bilingual education movement in New York welcome an approach to education which would help to reach the long term goal of institutionalizing bilingual education as a regular aspect of education available to all students in New York public schools.

The impact which multi-language educational programs might have on parent support for bilingual education is not clear. The attraction of this approach is that it provides a means for Hispanic parents and students to maintain their cultural heritage and also become integrated as valued members into American society. Within the context of the nation's language needs bilingual education and cultural pluralism can be seen as contributing to national security rather than divisiveness.

The results of this investigation of efforts to involve Hispanic parents in supporting bilingual education offers no support for the fears of critics that bilingual education encourages cultural or political separatism. On the contrary, this investigation has found that the more parents become involved in efforts to implement and promote bilingual education programs, the more they culturally adjust their attitudes, activities, goals, and strategies to be compatible with American society. In this process Hispanic parents are becoming integrated into the educational and political system on local, city, state, and national levels. As seen through the attempts to organize Hispanic parents the motivation and function of the bilingual education movement has not been to establish cultural, social, or political enclaves, but just the opposite to assist members of a language minority to enter and to contribute to American society. If the example of Quebec offers a lesson to the United States it is that language minority groups become separatist after they are denied full membership in the larger society. What is to be feared in the United States is not the impact of bilingual education which draws language minorities into the society, but rather the separatism which will result if this movement is rejected.

Footnotes

- 1 Fiske, Edward, "Reagan Record in Education: Mixed Results," New York Times Fall Survey of Education, November 14, 1982: 39; National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, "Changes in Title VII Proposed," in Forum 1982 5(5):1.
- 2 For example see Trombley, William, "Can Bilingual Education Do Its Job?," Los Angeles Times, September 4, 1980; Glazer, Nathan, "Pluralism and the New Immigrants," in Society 19(1):33-4; Bethell, Tom, "Against Bilingual Education," in Harpers February, 1979:30.
- 3 Interview with Awilda Orta, Director of the Office of Bilingual Education of the Board of Education of the City of New York, November 15, 1982.
- 4 Oxford, Rebecca, et al., Projections of Non-English Language Background and Limited English Proficient Persons in the United States to the Year 2000 (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics) 1981:28.
- 5 U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, Directory of Elementary and Secondary School Districts, and Schools in Selected School Districts: School Year 1978-1979 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), n.d.: Vol. 1:xiv.
- 6 Office of Bilingual Education, Board of Education in the City of New York, "Percent of Limited English Proficient Students by Ethnic/Language Groups Enrolled in New York City Public Schools, 1980-81."
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